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ABSTRACT

In January 1972, questionnaires on remedial reading were sent to all remedial reading teachers in Vancouver public schools. Also, letters were sent to the principals of those schools in which remedial reading programs were operating. They were asked to record their comments, criticisms, and commendations of remedial reading activities. Many teachers and principals noted that there was insufficient remedial reading teacher time and thought more should be allotted. The most common suggestion was that each school should have a full-time remedial reading teacher. The Reading Center was considered too small and too distant from most schools. General satisfaction with the program was expressed by both teachers and principals, but many thought that not enough was being done. Many felt that the emphasis on remedial reading should be at the primary level. The lack of space and equipment needed were mentioned. The value of the individual attention which the program permits the child was stressed by teachers and principals. (Author/DB)

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RESEARCH REPORT

Evaluation of Remedial Reading Services in Vancouver Schools

March, 1972

Marilyn J. Reid

Research Report 72-05

Department of Planning and Evaluation
Board of School Trustees
1595 West 10th Avenue
Vancouver 9, B. C.

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ABSTRACT

In January, 1972, questionnaires on remedial reading were sent to all remedial reading teachers in Vancouver public schools. Also, letters were sent to the principals of those schools in which remedial reading programs were operating. They were asked to record their comments, criticisms, and commendations of remedial reading activities.

Although the points emphasized by the teachers and principals tended to differ somewhat there were a number of common concerns.

Many teachers and principals noted that there was insufficient remedial reading teacher time and thought that more should be allotted. The most common suggestion in this regard was that each school should have a full-time remedial reading teacher.

Both teachers and principals commented on the inadequacy in size and number of staff of the Reading Centre. Many remarked that it could handle too few children. The distance of the Reading Centre from most schools restricts its use.

General satisfaction with the program was expressed by both teachers and principals but many thought that not enough was being done.

Many teachers and some principals pointed out that the emphasis of remedial reading should be at the primary level.

Both mentioned the lack of space and equipment needed for remedial reading.

The value to the child of the individual attention which the program permits was stressed by both teachers and principals.

The Education Department asked that information be obtained about programs of remedial reading in Vancouver schools. To this end, a questionnaire was directed to teachers of remedial reading seeking their opinions about the program. Principals of those schools in which remedial reading programs were operating were asked to record their comments, criticisms and commendations of remedial reading activities.

Teachers' Opinions

Questionnaires were distributed to all remedial reading teachers in Vancouver public schools, 51 in elementary schools and four in secondary schools. There were 51 returns of which 50 were usable (91% return).

Many teachers commented that they teach remedial reading at two schools and were incorporating information about both schools on one questionnaire. A number of other teachers noted that they teach only part-time.

The teachers' responses to the questionnaires are summarized below.

1. What teaching certificate do you hold?

Certificate		Frequency of Response	Percentage
Professional Advanced	-P. A. Masters	2	4%
Professional Advanced	-P. A.	4	8%
Professional Basic	-P. B.	16	32%
Professional Conditional	-P. C.	13	26%
Elementary Advanced	-E. A.	9	18%
Elementary Basic	-E. B.	6	12%
Elementary Conditional	-E. C.	0	-

More than two-thirds of the remedial reading teachers (35 or 70%) have a Professional Teaching Certificate, i. e., at the "P. C." or higher level.

2. What is the length of your teaching experience?

Number of Years	Frequency of Response	Percentage
Less than 1 year	1	2%
1 - 2 years	0	-
3 - 5 years	5	10%
6 - 10 years	12	24%
More than 10 years	32	64%

It appears that most remedial reading teachers have considerable teaching experience. Almost two-thirds of the respondents (32 or 64%) said that they have taught for more than ten years, while only six teachers (12%) have fewer than six years teaching experience.

3. Please list the courses that you have taken in the teaching of reading (excluding courses in remedial reading techniques).

Number of Courses	Credit Courses	Non-Credit Courses
1	12 (24%)	7 (14%)
2-3	29 (58%)	3 (6%)
4-5	6 (12%)	
6 or more	1 (2%)	
No response to question	1 (2%)	

A majority of the respondents have taken two or three credit courses in the teaching of reading, other than on remedial reading techniques. Relatively few teachers (7 or 14%) have taken more than three such courses. In addition, non-credit courses have been taken by 10 (20%) of the respondents.

N. B. Some respondents listed both credit and non-credit courses while others reported taking one or the other kind. Thus, the responses do not add up to 50.

4. Please list the courses that you have taken in remedial reading techniques.

Number of Courses	Credit Courses	Non-Credit Courses
1	20 (40%)	6 (12%)
2-3	12 (24%)	11 (22%)
4-5	1 (2%)	2 (4%)
6 or more	1 (2%)	
No response to question	4 (8%)	

Nearly two-thirds of the respondents (32 or 64%) have taken between one and three credit courses on remedial reading techniques. Only two teachers have taken more than three credit courses. Seventeen (34%) teachers reported having taken one to three non-credit courses in remedial reading techniques, while another two teachers (4%) have taken more than three such courses.

N. B. As in question 3, some respondents listed both credit and non-credit courses while others reported taking one or the other kind. Thus, the responses do not add up to 50.

5. How long have you served as a teacher of remedial reading?

Number of Years	Frequency of Response	Percentage
Less than 1 year	2	4%
1 - 2 years	11	22%
3 - 5 years	19	38%
6 - 10 years	14	28%
More than 10 years	4	8%

Two-thirds of the respondents (33 or 66%) have served as teachers of remedial reading for three to ten years, while thirteen (26%) have served less than three years and four (8%) have served longer than ten years in this capacity. The length of experience for the typical teacher of remedial reading seems to be about four to five years. It should be noted that the establishment, in 1964, of the present program of remedial reading has largely determined the responses of many teachers.

6. Indicate the percent of your time spent in teaching remedial reading at primary, intermediate, and secondary levels.

Percent of time	Primary	Intermediate	Secondary
Less than 25%	5 (10%)	13 (26%)	1 (2%)
25% to 49%	17 (34%)	19 (38%)	0 -
50% to 74%	13 (26%)	7 (14%)	2 (4%)
75% to 100%	7 (14%)	0 -	2 (4%)
No response or 0	8 (16%)	11 (22%)	45 (90%)

Generally, teachers of remedial reading in elementary schools spend the largest percentage of their time with primary pupils. As the numbers in secondary schools are so small, little comment can be made except that a fair number of students reach secondary school still needing remedial help in reading. There are enough such students to require at least 50% of the time of four of the five respondents from secondary schools.

7. a) With how many individual pupils are you presently working?

Number of Pupils	Boys	Girls	Total
0	2 (4%)	3 (6%)	1 (2%)
1- 5	1 (2%)	11 (22%)	2 (4%)
6-10	2 (4%)	17 (34%)	1 (2%)
11-20	15 (30%)	14 (28%)	7 (14%)
21-30	19 (38%)	0 -	12 (24%)
31-50	5 (10%)	2 (4%)	18 (36%)
More than 50	3 (6%)	0 -	6 (12%)
No response	3 (6%)	3 (6%)	3 (6%)

Boys receiving remedial instruction in reading seem to outnumber girls by nearly three to one. This finding is in keeping with most research (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10) over the past several years. The typical respondent has approximately 31 pupils for remedial reading.

Footnotes (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10) - Please see page 4.

1. Money, John, editor. 1966. The Disabled Reader: Education of the Dyslexic Child, Johns Hopkins Press, Baltimore. p. 7 "Rates by sex reveal that the number of retarded readers among boys (19. 5 per cent) is more than twice as high as that for girls (9. 0 per cent)."

2. Bentzen, F. 1963. Sex Ratios in Learning and Behaviour Disorders. American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 33: 92-98.

3. Miller, A. D., Margolin, J. B. and Yolles, S. F. 1957. Epidemiology of Reading Disabilities. American Journal of Public Health and the Nation's Health, 47: 1250-56.

4. Critchley, M. 1964. Developmental Dyslexia, Heinemann, London.

5. de Hirsch, Katrina, Jansky, Jeannette Jefferson, and Langford, William S. 1966. Predicting Reading Failure: A Preliminary Study, Harper & Row, New York.

6. Hall, R. Vance. 1963. Does Entrance Age Affect Achievement? Elementary School Journal, 63: 391-396.

7. Kagan, Jerome. 1964. The Child's Sex Role Classification of School Objects. Child Development, 35: 151-156.

8. Tanner, J. M. 1961. Education and Physical Growth, University of London Press, London.

9. Durrell, Donald D. 1956. Improving Reading Instruction, World Book, Yonkers-on-Hudson. p. 350 "Among children brought to the Boston Educational Clinic for study, the ratio of boys to girls is ten to one."

10. Smith, Nila B. 1963. Reading Instruction for Today's Children, Prentice-Hall Inc., Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey.

7. b) With how many other pupils have you been working during this school year?

Number of Pupils	Frequency of Response	Percentage
1- 5	8	16%
6-10	12	24%
11-20	6	12%
21-30	5	10%
31-50	5	10%
More than 50	6	12%
No response	8	16%

Most respondents have six or more pupils in addition to their remedial reading pupils.

It is thought, by the writer, that at least some of those teachers who gave no response to this question teach remedial reading only, i.e., a "0" response to this question.

8. What percentage of the school enrollment does this represent?

Percentage of Enrollment	Frequency of Response	Percentage
1-10%	40	80%
11-20%	3	6%
21-40%	2	4%
More than 40%	1	2%
No response	4	8%

A large majority of the respondents (40 or 80%) work with 10% or less of their school enrollment. Seldom does a teacher of remedial reading have more than 10% of the school population as students.

9. On the average, how many times each week do you see these pupils?

Times per Week	Frequency of Response	Percentage
1	0	-
2-3	23	46%
4-5	26	52%
No response	1	2%

On the average, remedial reading teachers see their pupils three to four times each week.

10. In general, how do you work with these pupils?

Response	Frequency of Response	Percentage
In class groups	1	2%
In groups of 8-15 pupils	5	10%
In smaller groups	35	70%
Individually	15	30%
A combination of some of these	11	22%
No response	1	2%

Most remedial reading teachers use more than one arrangement in working with their pupils. To avoid having the majority of the responses marked as "combinations", those returns with responses to one or two items were listed separately, while three or more responses were listed as "combinations". The most common arrangement (35 or 70%) seems to be "smaller groups". Many specified that these groups consisted of three to eight pupils. A substantial number of teachers (15 or 30%) see some of their pupils on an individual basis.

11. How many of these pupils that come to you are entirely unable to read? (i.e., below Grade 1 on the Schonell Graded Word List)

Number of Pupils	Frequency of Response	Percentage
0	15	30%
1- 5	18	36%
6-10	8	16%
More than 10	2	4%
No response	7	14%

Most teachers said that they had either none or relatively few pupils, i.e., no more than five, who were entirely unable to read. However, a considerable number of teachers (10 or 20%) said that they had six or more such pupils. Several respondents commented that they'd had more non-readers in September.

12. How many years retarded in reading is the typical pupil who is referred to you?

Number of Years	Frequency of Response	Percentage
0	0	-
1, or 1-2	29	58%
2, or 2-3	18	36%
4-5	1	2%
More than 5	0	-
No response	2	4%

More than half of the respondents (29 or 58%) described their typical pupil as being one year or between one and two years retarded in reading.

However, for a substantial number of the teachers (18 or 36%) the typical pupil is two years or two to three years retarded in his reading. Only one teacher (at the secondary level), said that his pupils are generally four to five years retarded in reading.

13. What liaison do you maintain with the teachers of the pupils referred to you?

The most common form of liaison between the remedial reading and regular classroom teachers is informal discussion regarding individual pupils. This was mentioned by 42 (84%) of the respondents. The frequency of these discussions varies, dependent largely on need and availability. In most instances this is a mutual exchange, including discussion of: the child both in his regular and in remedial classes, planning for him, and consideration of other weaknesses and problem areas. Some respondents said that in addition to these informal discussions they have, on occasion, more formal conferences which sometimes include the nurse and counsellor.

Twelve respondents (24%) said that they provide suggestions and materials, e.g., exercises, programs, books, for the teachers to use with remedial reading pupils in their regular classes.

Six teachers (12%) commented that they submit reports to teachers and sometimes to parents. Usually, this is in addition to having discussions. One respondent at the secondary level said he sends reports to counsellors and administrators, also.

Satisfaction with the liaison between remedial and regular teachers was expressed by six respondents (12%). They made such comments as "excellent" and "good cooperation".

Four teachers (8%) remarked that they assist regular teachers in testing and evaluation.

Another four respondents (8%) commented that the regular teacher reinforces the work of the remedial reading teacher in her class work with the child.

14. During the present school year, how many of the referred pupils have made sufficient gains in reading achievement to enable them to resume participation in the regular program of instruction?

Number of Pupils	Frequency of Response	Percentage
0	5	10%
1- 5	21	42%
6-10	12	24%
11-20	4	8%
More than 20	3	6%
No response	5	10%

There is considerable variation in the responses to this question with a range from "0" to "more than 20" pupils who have been able to resume regular

classwork. However, most teachers (33 or 66%) have had between one and ten referred pupils who have made sufficient gains in reading achievement to enable them to resume participation in the regular program of instruction.

15. What follow-up do you practise with these pupils?

The most popular kind of follow-up is to have conferences or discussions with the regular teachers. These are generally informal and are usually concerned with a check on the progress of the child. This form of follow-up was mentioned by 26 teachers (52%).

Sixteen teachers (32%) remarked that if a child continues to have trouble with his reading or if his problems return when he is back in the regular class, he resumes seeing the remedial reading teacher, generally for a short time. Some said children come for further help when it is necessary; a few said the child receives further help on an irregular basis; while others said the child resumes having regular assistance.

Nine respondents (18%) said that they make suggestions, provide material, or give other help to the regular teacher in breaking the child back into the regular program. Some provide special work for the child to do in class. Others make suggestions about individual work to be done with the child by the regular teacher.

Five respondents (10%) commented that they have an open-door arrangement whereby the students are encouraged to drop in for irregular, informal visits.

Four teachers (8%) remarked that they re-evaluate children's progress after their return to regular classes by retesting them later in the year or in the following school year.

Three respondents (6%) said that they communicate in some manner with the parents of their students.

Three teachers (6%) commented that they review or examine students' reports at report card times.

16. What changes, if any, have you noted in the attitudes of your pupils towards reading, towards teachers, towards school, and towards themselves?

The most frequently noted change in pupils' attitudes is that as a result of experiencing success, pupils' self concepts and self-confidence improve. This kind of comment was made by 21 teachers (42%). Several remarked that the increased confidence and feelings of security of their pupils are reflected in all of the school activities of these children.

Nineteen teachers (38%) commented that their pupils showed renewed interest in and enthusiasm for reading. Their attitude towards books is improved. Many

children now like reading who didn't like it previously. A few teachers commented that pupils come to enjoy remedial reading periods.

Sixteen respondents (32%) have observed a general improvement in attitude in their pupils which they attribute to the pupils having experienced success.

Improved work habits and behaviour of pupils have been noted by fourteen teachers (28%). There are fewer discipline problems. Children are more willing to settle to individual work.

Twelve teachers (24%) commented that children are happier. Some said that the children seemed happy with themselves over their successes.

Eight respondents (16%) said that the experiencing of success has caused children to develop a better attitude towards school. Pupils enjoy school and school work more than they did prior to having remedial reading instruction.

More confidence in oral reading and word attack was noted by six teachers (12%). Pupils seem more at ease with reading.

Greater use of the school library by these pupils was commented on by four teachers (8%).

Three teachers (6%) remarked about the improved participation and interest in activities in general, such as in discussions.

Two teachers (4%) stated that children enjoy the extra attention and are glad to know that someone cares about them.

Improved posture in their pupils has been noted by two teachers (4%).

Another two respondents (4%) observed that their pupils are more relaxed, less nervous and fearful.

Three respondents (6%) said that at least some pupils, usually a small minority, show no change at all in their attitudes.

17. In general, the present provisions in our school system for remedial reading services include:

- a Reading Centre at Emily Carr School where pupils with severe reading problems may receive expert intensive help over an extended period of time, and
- a teacher-specialist in each school to assist pupils with lesser problems who are unable to cope with the regular program of reading instruction.

What do you consider to be the strengths and weaknesses of these arrangements?

Strengths:

The most frequently noted strength was that more individualized help and attention for the children is possible. This was remarked on by 21 teachers (42%). They commented that help was available when needed. The teachers observed that this individual attention is good for the children both academically and personally.

Eleven respondents (22%) expressed general satisfaction with the program although they thought it was somewhat inadequate. What is being done is good but much more is needed.

Another eleven teachers (22%) remarked that the program provides something positive, a hopeful alternative to children with reading problems. It relieves pressure on the child by placing him in a warm, healthy environment which is free from competition. The situation is less frustrating to the child for here he can receive sumpathetic help without ridicule. One teacher said that, for some students, remedial reading is "almost a last chance".

Six teachers (12%) commented that the remedial reading program allows for diagnosis or analysis of pupils' weaknesses.

Another six respondents (12%) noted that the program allows for intensive corrective work with children who have reading problems.

General and unqualified satisfaction with the program was expressed by five teachers (10%). They said that the program is achieving the desired results. Some said this satisfaction is felt by the school, teachers, children, and parents.

Five teachers (10%) noted that with a specialist in the school, close contact between regular teachers and the specialist is possible. The close liaison is valuable and ultimately beneficial to the child. This arrangement enables a teacher to discuss the learning problem with someone who knows the child.

Personal improvement in the children--academically, socially, and in their attitudes, etc., was listed as a strength by four teachers (8%).

The Reading Centre is a good resource centre, said four respondents (8%). Some have obtained books and other materials from the Reading Centre while others said that they have found it generally helpful.

Three teachers (6%) commented that the program provides more opportunities for success.

Another three teachers (6%) said that it is good that much work can be done in the child's own school. This means that a child is able to be in his own class most of the time.

The Reading Centre is necessary, in fact, urgently needed, three respondents (6%) noted. Many children are in need and the numbers of such children are not reducing.

General satisfaction with the Reading Centre was expressed by three teachers (6%) with such comments as "it's a great help" and, "it is good for chronic or serious problems".

Three teachers (6%) remarked that the remedial reading teacher is a resource on reading to the whole school. She provides assistance to teachers on programming, suggestions for classroom work and help, etc.

Two teachers (4%) said that the program relieves pressure and is helpful to the regular teacher.

Another two respondents (4%) commended the present emphasis at the lower, primary grades.

In-service classes at the Reading Centre and by Vancouver School Board personnel help teachers become aware of new techniques, noted two teachers (4%).

Weaknesses:

The weakness most frequently noted by the remedial reading teachers was that remedial reading teacher time is inadequate. This was noted by 23 teachers (46%). As a result, teachers are not reaching enough pupils.

The Reading Centre is considered inadequate in terms of the number of children it serves, by fifteen teachers (30%). They say it is too small in size and in the number of its staff members. A few remarked that there is no room there for secondary students.

Seven teachers (14%) considered the distance of the Reading Centre from their school to be restrictive. Too much time is lost and transportation poses problems.

Four teachers (8%) noted that children taken out of their classroom for remedial reading miss work; they are made to feel different; and they suffer interruptions in friendships.

Four teachers (8%) observed that remedial reading teachers often have other duties, e.g., relief teaching. They thought they should not have other responsibilities as these cut into remedial reading time too much. One teacher stated that sometimes the teacher has so many other jobs she can't do her own properly.

Four respondents (8%) commented that some pupils are referred for remedial reading inappropriately, i. e., children who can't profit very much from the program, and those who hold up the other pupils, e. g., slow learners and New Canadians.

Problems with communication were mentioned by three teachers (6%). They said there is too little time for communication and often it is difficult to arrange. Problems in communication between remedial reading and regular teachers, and between the Reading Centre and the school were specified.

Three teachers (6%) considered that the pupil-teacher ratio is often too great for a remedial situation. There are simply too many pupils at a time for the teacher to give them intensive help.

Three respondents (6%) said the physical environment for remedial reading at their schools is inadequate because of the lack of room.

Two teachers (4%) commented that there is a lack of adequate equipment and materials.

Two others (4%) remarked that they have had to spend their own money on equipment.

Two respondents (4%) have experienced some difficulty in getting children from their regular classes for remedial reading.

18. What suggestions would you make for the improvement of remedial reading services to students? Do you consider that there is a better approach to remedial reading?

The most common suggestion was that there should be more remedial reading teacher time. This was suggested by 26 respondents (52%). Generally, the teachers asked that each school have a full-time rather than a half-time teacher. Several remarked that all schools don't have the same needs and said remedial reading teacher time should be allotted more on the basis of need.

Eighteen teachers (36%) stated that the emphasis of remedial reading should be on the primary and early grades. Several respondents said that early detection and diagnosis are important. A few considered that there should be more preventive work in the early grades and a greater emphasis on readiness for reading.

Thirteen respondents (26%) suggested that a suitable (or larger) room and more equipment should be provided. Some of the kinds of equipment suggested were: phonics workbooks, typewriter, listening centre, carrels, games, tape recorder, bookcases, and various devices.

There should be more volunteer and/or paid aides available to the remedial reading teacher said nine respondents (18%). Several teachers commented on the value of the aides in contributing to the success of the program.

Eight teachers (16%) said that the services of the Reading Centre need to be extended. It should be larger and have more personnel.

Another eight respondents (16%) said that there should be more reading centres around the city. Several teachers said there should be one reading centre in each area. Others said, more generally, that there should be expanded decentralization of the Reading Centre. One commented that the additional reading centres should be designed to be flexible to meet the specific needs of each area.

More individual help and programming for pupils is needed, suggested eight teachers (16%).

Seven respondents (14%) thought that the remedial reading program could be broadened to include other subject areas such as social studies and science but with an emphasis on the reading aspects of these. The remedial reading teacher could go to observe these classes and provide help.

Six teachers (12%) commented that the remedial reading program should be continued with a teacher specialist in each school.

The standards for remedial reading teachers should be raised said five respondents (10%). They thought that these teachers should have better education, training, and experience. It was suggested that they should be asked to upgrade themselves and extend their skills.

Four respondents (8%) suggested that remedial reading teachers should not have other duties such as having a regular class or doing relief work.

It was suggested by four teachers (8%) that someone other than the remedial reading teacher should do the testing and diagnosis. It was proposed that the Reading Coordinator or psychologists should perform these functions.

All regular teachers should be better trained in various aspects of reading, said three respondents (6%). In-service training should be provided for them.

There should be more opportunities for remedial reading teachers to share ideas with one another, suggested three teachers (6%). They proposed that conferences, in-service, and observing other remedial reading classes would facilitate communication among them.

Three respondents (6%) said that the remedial reading teacher should be a resource on reading for the whole school. They thought that she should organize reading or assist with reading programs for all pupils.

Three teachers (6%) stated that there should be more opportunity for communication between regular and remedial reading teachers.

It was suggested by two respondents (4%) that Learning Assistance Centres should be developed with remedial reading a part of these.

Two teachers (4%) suggested a team approach in evaluating candidates for remedial reading. Such evaluations should include assessment of physical and psychological aspects.

All teachers must understand that the underachiever is the proper remedial reading pupil proposed two respondents (4%). They said that slow learners, or children with emotional or language problems are not suitable referrals.

On the other hand, two teachers (4%) said that children other than those with learning disabilities need and should receive remedial reading help.

A further two respondents (4%) suggested that there should be a resource other than remedial reading for New Canadians.

Two teachers (4%) wondered whether having a tutorial system in which older pupils help younger ones might be helpful. Two respondents mentioned that they are already doing this to some extent.

Additional Information on Time Allotment for Remedial Reading

Data were obtained from the individual schedules submitted by the remedial reading teachers to the Reading Centre.

Based on these schedules it was determined that each school which has a remedial reading teacher receives an average of 15 periods (out of 35) per week of remedial reading. The range is from 0 to 35 periods of remedial reading per week.

Each remedial reading teacher does an average of 22 periods of remedial reading per week. Again the range is from 0 to 35 periods of remedial reading per week.

(The difference between how much time each school receives and how much time each teacher gives is accounted for largely by the fact that many teachers work in more than one school.)

There would seem to be a considerable discrepancy between what the teachers and principals see as desirable, i.e., a full-time remedial reading teacher for each school, and what the schools actually receive.

Remedial reading teachers have an assortment of other duties. Many teach other subjects such as language arts, literature, guidance, reading, social studies, arithmetic, sewing, and spelling. Others have relief duties or work in the school library.

Principals' Opinions

Letters were directed to principals of those schools having remedial reading programs asking for their comments, criticisms and commendations of remedial reading activities.

Letters were sent to 70 principals and there were 46 replies (66% return).

The comments of principals have been grouped under four headings:

1. Strengths of the Program
2. Weaknesses of the Program
3. Suggestions for Improvement
4. Other General Comments

1. Strengths of the Program

(a) Satisfaction with the Program

The most common expression was one of general appreciation of the remedial reading program. Sixteen principals indicated that pupils, parents, and teachers were generally satisfied. Some of these principals noted the improvements in reading abilities, in general attitude toward school, in self-concept, etc.

(b) Commendation of Remedial Reading Teachers

Ten principals spoke highly of the work being done by the remedial reading teacher; five of these referred to expertise in diagnosing reading difficulties. Eight principals commended the teacher for the extensive help given to pupils with specific problems. Eleven principals pointed out that the remedial reading teacher was of considerable help to the regular classroom teacher, both informally and through in-service training. Some spoke of the close communication among these teachers. Eight principals noted that many pupils benefit from the interest and special attention paid by the remedial reading teacher. They felt that the individualized or small group instruction was good for children with reading problems. Two principals commented on the skill of the remedial reading teacher in employing a variety of materials and methods.

(c) Satisfaction with Services at the Reading Centre

Eight principals expressed appreciation of the Reading Centre. They spoke of its value in providing consultative help, diagnosis and treatment of severe problems and as a resource centre for materials, methods, and in-service training. Some principals spoke of the gains in reading ability and self-confidence of pupils referred to the Reading Centre.

(d) Satisfaction with the Present Administrative Arrangements

Six principals spoke of the benefits of the present arrangements whereby most reading problems are handled in the local school where pupils can work in familiar surroundings among their peers and continue their regular work in other subjects. For more serious problems, help is available at the Reading Centre when it is needed. The current arrangements are reassuring to pupils, parents, and teachers, and there is a general feeling that those pupils receiving help are making reasonably good progress. The principals have noted a positive reaction from the public because something is being done for poor readers. A few noted that it was still not enough.

(e) Other Comments

"Pupils referred to the Reading Centre get the benefit of treatment by experts."

"The turnover of students (i.e., their return to regular classes) is slow but steady."

"Volunteer aides contribute to the success of the program."

"Diagnosis by the remedial reading teacher has helped to make other teachers aware of learning disabilities."

"Parents can be readily involved in the treatment."

"Remedial reading services provide relief for the subject teacher who has a pupil with gross difficulties."

2. Weaknesses of the Program

(a) Insufficient Teacher Time

Sixteen principals noted that there are not enough remedial reading teachers to cope with the demand for service and as a result many pupils needing help are not currently being served. Two principals noted that this situation is frustrating to the teachers, that they do not have time to do an adequate job for all pupils who are referred. In general, principals were satisfied with what was being done but they indicated that much more help was needed.

(b) Limitations at the Reading Centre

Thirteen principals noted that the Reading Centre was inadequate, i.e., that it could handle relatively few referrals. Another thirteen called attention to the problems in transporting pupils to and from the Reading Centre. Three principals regretted that the Reading Centre takes pupils away from their peers and their community school environment. Other principals felt that there were too many pupils referred to the Reading Centre whose emotional problems made difficult the treatment of their reading difficulties.

(c) Limited Competence of Some Teachers

Five principals made reference to the limited qualifications, educational and/or personal, of some remedial reading teachers.

(d) The Narrow Focus of Remedial Reading

Five principals criticized remedial reading for being too specialized. They felt that it results in fragmentation and a disjointed approach to learning difficulties. They suggested that reading deficiencies are only a small part of the total learning problem.

(e) Insufficient Resources

Two principals claimed that there were insufficient materials and equipment. They spoke of the need, specifically, for more books of high interest and low vocabulary level, and for controlled readers. Another principal spoke of the limited space in the school for remedial reading.

(f) Other Comments

"There is often little demonstrable improvement by pupils who have had remedial help."

"The removal of a child from his class may reinforce his feelings of failure."

"Volunteer help may be undependable."

"Gains made during the treatment period often disappear when the child returns to his regular class."

"Often slow learning children use up too much of the time of the remedial reading teacher."

One principal noted the tendency of his remedial reading teacher to consider her work apart from, rather than supplementary to, that done in the classroom by the regular teacher.

3. Suggestions for Improvement

(a) More Teacher Time

Twenty-two principals suggested that there was a need for more remedial reading teacher time. Most of these would like to have a remedial reading teacher full-time. They felt that such a teacher should not be given other duties, such as those of librarian.

(b) Integration of Services in a Learning Assistance Centre

Sixteen principals favoured the incorporation of the remedial reading program into a full-time Learning Assistance Centre. Some principals felt the remedial teacher should be in charge of the Centre, other principals said that in their schools this was happening already.

(c) Greater Availability of Professional Consultants

Six principals specified that the services of experts were needed to a greater extent than they were presently available. They specified psychologists, teacher consultants, etc. These persons would provide diagnosis, prescription and specific help.

(d) The Need for More Materials and Equipment

Six principals emphasized the need for more books (particularly those of a high interest, low vocabulary level), programmed readers, reading rate accelerators, controlled readers, etc.

(e) More Individualization of Instruction

Six principals emphasized the need for a more individualized approach to reading problems. Teachers should come to recognize that no one approach will serve all children.

(f) Extension of the Reading Centre

Five principals urged that the services of the Reading Centre be extended. Some of these recommended the establishment of a Reading Centre in each of the eight areas.

(g) The Need to Focus on Primary Grade Pupils

Five principals suggested that greater emphasis be placed on early remediation of reading difficulties, claiming that the focus should be on problems during the primary years.

(h) Better Relationships with Classroom Teachers

Five principals suggested that the remedial reading teachers might provide more specialized help and support to classroom teachers.

(i) Other Suggestions for Improvement

"Remedial reading teachers should be well qualified. They should be equipped with more knowledge and special skills."

(i) Other Suggestions for Improvement (Cont'd.)

"Teachers of remedial reading should be more carefully selected."

"Greater assistance should be provided to teachers of New Canadians."

"Greater use should be made of aides."

"All approaches to reading and remediation should be thoroughly evaluated."

"Classroom teachers should be trained in remedial techniques so that they would be able to do remedial work in their own classrooms."

"Closer liaison between teachers of remedial reading and teachers of physical education in regard to motor development of children."

"The need for early identification of reading problems in Year One."

"Focus attention on developmental reading rather than remedial reading even at the kindergarten level."

"Remedial reading is needed in secondary as well as in elementary schools."

"Children with emotional problems should not be referred to the Reading Centre."

"Send those children to the Reading Centre who have reading problems only."

"Don't reduce the amount of time for remedial reading to satisfy additional needs of Learning Assistance Centre as this would dilute the work of the teacher."

"There is less need for a Reading Centre now because teachers are developing individualized reading programs."

"Perhaps a tutorial system should be considered in which the older, able students help younger, weaker ones."

"Provide in-service training to help teachers devise prescriptive treatment for the difficulties that are diagnosed." Several respondents urged that remedial reading teachers be retained because they considered their work to be very important.

4. Other General Comments

Seven principals referred to the relationship between reading difficulties and other problems. They suggested that remedial reading is not always the primary need and help of another kind may be equally important.

Three principals emphasized the success of the program depends on the teacher. They emphasized that the personal and educational qualifications and experience of the teacher are vitally important.

Summary

In January, 1972, questionnaires on remedial reading were sent to all (55) remedial reading teachers in Vancouver public schools. There were 50 usable returns (91%). Also, letters were sent to the (70) principals of those schools in which remedial reading programs were operating. There were 46 replies (66% return). Principals were asked to record their comments, criticisms and commendations of remedial reading activities.

Some of the highlights in the teachers' responses:

Seventy per cent of the remedial reading teachers have a Professional Teaching Certificate.

Almost two-thirds of the respondents have taught for more than ten years.

A majority of the teachers have taken two or three credit courses in the teaching of reading, other than on remedial reading techniques. One-fifth of the teachers have taken non-credit courses.

Nearly two-thirds of the respondents have taken between one and three credit courses on remedial reading techniques. Nearly forty per cent of the teachers have taken non-credit courses.

The length of experience for the typical teacher of remedial reading is four to five years.

Generally, teachers of remedial reading in elementary schools spend the largest percentage of their time with primary pupils.

Boys receiving remedial instruction in reading seem to outnumber girls by nearly three to one. The typical respondent has approximately 31 pupils for remedial reading. Most teachers have six or more pupils in addition to their remedial reading pupils.

A large majority of the respondents work with 10% or less of their school enrollment.

On the average, remedial reading teachers see their pupils three to four times each week.

The most common arrangement for working with pupils is for the teacher to see them in small groups, i.e., three to eight pupils generally, although many teachers see some pupils individually.

Most teachers have either none or relatively few pupils who are entirely unable to read. However, one-fifth of the teachers have six or more such pupils.

For more than half of the remedial reading teachers the typical pupil is one year or between one and two years retarded in his reading. Even so, the typical pupil of more than a third of the teachers is two years, or two to three years retarded in his reading.

The most common form of liaison between the remedial reading and regular teachers is informal discussion regarding individual pupils. Many remedial reading teachers also provide suggestions and materials for the regular teachers to use in their classes with these pupils.

Two-thirds of the teachers have had between one and ten referred pupils who have made sufficient gains in reading achievement during the present school year to enable them to resume participation in the regular program of instruction.

The most popular kind of follow-up practised by the respondents is to have informal discussions with the regular teachers. Many teachers said that if a child continues to have trouble with his reading, or his problems return, he resumes seeing the remedial reading teacher. Some make suggestions to the regular teacher or provide materials that will help the child during his transition to the regular program.

The most frequently noted change in pupils' attitudes is that as a result of experiencing success, pupils' self concepts and self-confidence improved. Many teachers commented that their pupils showed renewed interest in and enthusiasm for reading. Other changes observed were: a general improvement in attitude, improved work habits and behaviour, and happier children.

The strength most commonly reported was that more individualized help and attention for the children is possible. Many teachers expressed general satisfaction with the program although they thought it was somewhat inadequate. Others remarked that the program provides something positive, a hopeful alternative to children with reading problems.

The weakness most often noted was that remedial reading teacher time is inadequate. Many teachers offered negative comments about the Reading Centre--that it is too small in size and in staff, and that the distance of the Reading Centre from their school is restrictive.

The most common suggestion made by the teachers was that there should be more remedial reading teacher time--most thought that each school should have a full-time teacher. Many stated that the emphasis of remedial reading should be on the primary and early grades. Others suggested that a suitable (or larger) room and more equipment should be provided.

Some of the highlights in the principals' responses:

Regarding strengths, the most common expression was one of general appreciation of the remedial reading program. Many principals pointed out that the remedial reading teacher was of considerable help to the regular classroom teacher, both informally and through in-service training. Others spoke highly of the work being done by the remedial reading teachers and by the staff at the Reading Centre.

The weakness noted most frequently was that there are not enough remedial reading teachers to cope with the demand for service and as a result many pupils needing help are not currently being served. Many principals noted that the Reading Centre is inadequate, i. e., that it could handle relatively few referrals. Others called attention to the problems in transporting pupils to and from the Reading Centre.

The suggestion most often made by the principals was that there is a need for more remedial reading teacher time--most would like to have a remedial reading teacher full-time for each school. Some principals favoured the incorporation of the remedial reading program into a full-time Learning Assistance Centre.

Although the points emphasized by the teachers and principals tended to differ somewhat there were a number of common concerns.

Many teachers and principals noted that there was insufficient remedial reading teacher time and thought that more should be allotted. The most common suggestion in this regard was that each school should have a full-time remedial reading teacher.

Both teachers and principals commented on the inadequacy in size and number of staff of the Reading Centre. Many remarked that it could handle too few children. The distance of the Reading Centre from most schools restricts its use.

General satisfaction with the program was expressed by both teachers and principals but many thought that not enough was being done.

Many teachers and some principals pointed out that the emphasis of remedial reading should be at the primary level.

Both mentioned the lack of space and equipment needed for remedial reading.

The value to the child of the individual attention which the program permits was stressed by both teachers and principals.